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Letter from Taizé

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Summer on the hill of Taizé

Reconciliation and solidarity

This summer, many more pilgrims than ever before came to the hill of Taizé. Of course, what was most striking was the presence of young adults from all the countries of Eastern Europe. For the first time, groups were able to come from Romania, the Soviet Union, East Germany, and of course Czechoslovakia. The number of young people from other Eastern and Western European countries also increased.

Each week, there were between 5,000 and 6,000 participants. Among them, a number were from other continents. By their presence, they gave a worldwide dimension to the search for reconciliation and solidarity.

As a result of the good weather, the changes in the church and the new dormitories, and especially because of the seriousness and the inner preparation of those who came for the first time, the meetings were joyful and serene. The common desire to go beyond problems of communication, to leave prejudices behind, and to go together to the wellsprings of faith enabled each participant to feel accepted, recognized, important for the others. Some had already experienced hospitality on their way to Taizé: more than 10,000 Poles were welcomed by German parishes in the course of their journey for a prayer, a meal and a short rest.

During the summer months, as in past years, some Church leaders spent a few days on the hill to take part in the community prayer and to speak with brothers and young people.

Among them were bishops from France, Britain, Spain, Germany, Holland, India and Indonesia, as well as Protestant Church leaders from different countries, notably Emilio Castro, Secretary General of the World Council of Churches. The Roman Catholic and Anglican bishops of Belfast spent a week in Taizé with a group of seventy young Catholics and Protestants from Northern Ireland.

There were also Orthodox priests present from Russia and Romania. About fifty of the young people who came from the Russian Orthodox Church belonged to the groups created by Father Alexander Men, who was recently assassinated near Moscow.

Fifty years ago...

Taizé is fifty years old this year. On August 21, 1940, Brother Roger found the village of Taizé and settled there to create a community. Alone, he began a life of prayer, while hiding refugees. Two years later he was joined by three other brothers, then others came little by little.

This anniversary is being commemorated not by a single celebration but by several meetings spread over a few months. One of them took place Saturday, September 1st, in the presence of Cardinal Decourtray, archbishop of Lyons and president of the French Bishops' Conference. A young brother of the community, a Spaniard, made his life-commitment on that day.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Taizé, Brother Roger received many messages, including the following:

Pope John Paul II: "...When you were still alone, it was by the appeal of a poor woman that the Lord caused you to choose the village of Taizé. You also recognized the Lord when refugees and victims of the war that was ravaging Europe came knocking at your door and benefitted from your hospitality... I bless the Lord when I remember the humble origins of the Taizé Community and when I see what He is bringing about there today...

"On this fiftieth anniversary, we are reminded of this certainty: wherever poor people are welcomed, wherever prayer nourishes faith, Christ brings to birth communities of love and of faith that radiate unity. When I visited Taizé in 1986, I expressed the affection I bear for your community, the trust I have in it and the ways it can discern better and better the will of the Lord in order to accomplish it. That message remains in my mind as a personal letter addressed to you and to each of your brothers."

Patriarch Dimitrios of Constantinople: "At this time when fifty years have passed since you arrived in the village of Taizé, where you founded the community that has become so well known,...we desire to mention particularly what Taizé does to help the young come closer to Christ, and to awaken in them the sense of their responsibility to bring about understanding, sharing and friendship between the Churches, between individuals and between the nations of the earth..." **continued on page 8**

Discovering the hidden fire

The young people from Czechoslovakia who came each week to Taizé in large numbers generously invited all those whom they met. By the witness of their life, of their searching, of their faith which has led them to take risks, they have given a lot to others. And yet, they are the ones who are now insisting on the necessity for visits, and for the European meeting, which will permit a sharing in depth and a strong and visible experience of communion.

There is a great desire to meet, and not only as a way out of the isolation imposed by the last fifty years of their history. In a situation where, after the enthusiasm of the revolution, the difficulties of rebuilding are now being felt, it is essential to find a new impetus to continue with what was beginning to be built.

The revolution was an experience of the strength of unity; now reforms must be put into practice, and the desire for reconciliation extended to the whole of Czechoslovakian society.

For Christians, this is also the time to find ways of making concrete the desire for community life in the parishes, the need to transmit the fire that was hidden and which animated those who, because of Christ, had accepted difficulties and risks. In this period of tremendous changes, the European meeting will also be, like the meeting in Wroclaw and each week of meeting in Taizé, an occasion to add another stone to the construction of Europe. A young man from Czechoslovakia said, "It's true that we want to build a European house, but the most important thing now is forming and reconciling the family who will live in it!"

An Estonian girl from Tallinn was inspired by these reflections: "Listening to young people from Czechoslovakia in Taizé, I saw that in spite of the very different political and economic situations, we were close on a spiritual level. In Estonia, too, there has been a complete change concerning Christianity. For the last several months, people have been discovering the riches hidden in Christ.

"Ministers and priests are asked to speak in schools and businesses. I remember the dark years before. In those days, the Church was a space of light, with people who dared to risk something because of their faith in Christ. The time of freedom that is beginning will bring new difficulties, probably less visible ones, but the previous period has led us to acquire a great confidence: nothing can separate us from God; his love remains both in the day and at night. ▷

For the preparation
of the European meeting in Prague
here are some themes for reflection around three basic questions:

Going to Prague is a way of expressing our desire to make our own life a pilgrimage with Christ. The preparation is not only material; it involves above all a reflection on one's own life and that of one's group or community. In that way, every person will have something to share with the others during the morning meetings in the parishes and the workshops in the afternoon.

- How can we live this stage of the pilgrimage of trust in a spirit of reconciliation?
– How can we make our own local community a place of communion and sharing?
– What visible sign of communion, of universality can we begin to give already at present?
– In what ways can we begin to tear down walls that divide or that foster mistrust?

- How can we find concrete ways of taking part in the building up of the European family where solidarity is lived out?
We remember that the Europe that is being built will take the shape each person gives it by beginning in his or her own region.
– What gestures of solidarity are we accomplishing for those who are deprived of material resources or of human rights, nearby and far away?
– What are we doing so that egoisms of regional or national families, or interest groups, are not reinforced?
– So that Europe may truly become a family, are we attentive to the gifts of the most humble, of those who are too young or too old, too inefficient or too wounded by life?

In each region, people can meet several times to pray and share together.
Why not propose, on these occasions, small local pilgrimages in the same spirit (visiting communities of foreigners, other churches or parishes, lonely people...)?

- How can we find in the Gospel the joy and the strength that keep us from getting discouraged?
– What supports us in a daily personal prayer, or a regular group prayer?
– What can we do to renew our link with our roots, with the inner references that enable us to overcome our fears?
– How can we communicate the joy of our hope to those around us?

EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS

28 Dec 90 - 2 Jan 91

Prague

TAIZÉ

continued from page 2

"Thinking about symbols of reconciliation, I remember the rainbow. It's strange that this image is always linked to reconciliation, because the light is separated into different colours. Still, I see hope in a rainbow: the light is reconciled; the colours melt into one another and are respectful of one another. Reconciliation is only possible in love and forgiveness.

"In Estonia today, there is a great spiritual thirst. And some complain that, in their churches, they cannot find the answers they are looking for. A friend told me he was going to change parishes to go to one where there was, as he put it, «a true prophet and a more exact teaching.» Why doesn't he realize that the activity of a prophet always has limits, and there will always be a better teaching somewhere?

"Staying in one's parish means having a home. It means sharing not only its joys and its good points, but also its troubles and its defects. I love my church; I love it when it is empty and I can go there to find God in my heart; I love it when it is full and I can go there to see God in my neighbour.

"I can understand why people want to see what is happening in other places, but you travel better when you have a home somewhere. I know that I am not the light, but I can be a colour, the one God gave me, and I can form a rainbow together with others."

In Prague and in Czechoslovakia, the preparation already began in the springtime, with the first visits made by brothers and young people. Throughout the autumn, meetings of preparation are taking place in all the cities and in the parishes of Prague. The whole country is getting ready to welcome us. □

Dates: Arrive Friday morning, 28 December 1990 between 7am and 12 noon. Depart mid-afternoon, Wednesday 2 January 1990.

Accommodation: with families and in halls. Simple conditions. Bring sleeping-bag and lightweight mattress. Groups should not arrange their own accommodation in advance as this detracts from the element of sharing.

General Programme: We will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the city. In each neighbourhood there will be a morning prayer, then meetings in small groups and visits to people with an involvement in the local area. Each day there will be two common prayers for everyone in city-centre churches; in the afternoon, workshops on different themes.

17 to 29 year olds: three different ways of taking part:
— the main group: participation in the life of the parishes of the city.
— the silence group (has its own separate accommodation).
— while still participating in the life of the parishes, helping with practical work for the meeting, or "animation", or music for the common prayers. To do this, arrive, if possible, on December 26 between 8am and 4pm. It is not possible to arrive on Dec. 27.

15 & 16 year olds can only take part if accompanied by a group leader over 20 who stays with them, and all participate in the main group (see above) from 28 December on (do not arrive before).

Adults over 30 all participate in the main group (see above) from 28 December on (do not arrive before). Those who cannot stay in the same simple conditions as the young people and need a "real bed" indicate this on their registration form. Those who are accompanying a group of young people are welcome to stay with them if they will accept the same simple accommodation.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should register directly to Taizé — best by telephone in October or November — to arrange suitable accommodation.

Your contribution to cost (about £30; more for adults over 30) covers all meals during the meeting and a public transport pass. A closer estimate of the contribution expected from each participant will be given in the next edition of the Letter from Taizé.

Visa: No visa necessary for Irish and British. But full passport required. Those from other countries should check if they are required to have a visa.

Travel
— from Britain:
1. Coach. Departure from London, 7.15am, 27th December. Return to London, afternoon 3rd January. £125. Nuneaton Coaches, Whitacre Road, NUNEATON, CV11 6BN. Tel: (0203) 325682 Fax: (0203) 375875 Telex: 31351 NUNCO.
2. Charter flight. Cost £200-£210. Send £30 deposit by 5th October to: Rev Jeremy Caddick, University Church of Christ the King, Gordon Square, LONDON WC1H OAG Tel.(home): (071) 482 2133 [Cheques payable to him, with the mention "Prague"]. If sufficient deposits (about 100) are not received by mid-October, the flight will be cancelled and all deposits will be returned.
3. To arrive on December 26th to help: either go with a coach leaving Taizé on Dec. 25th (600 FF return. Contact Taizé), or travel by air (advice available from Jeremy Caddick).
— from Ireland:
1. Flight to London and coach London-Prague. IR£225. Geraldine Wall, Catholic Youth Council, Arran Quay, Dublin 7. Tel: (01)725055 Fax: (01)725010.
2. Direct flight Dublin-Prague. IR£250. Rev. Paul Willoughby, Church of Ireland Youth Council, 10 Filchester Park, Glenageary, Co. Dublin. Tel: (01)807543.
— from other continents: (17-29 years) It is possible to spend a week in Taizé either before or after the Prague meeting. Bus from Taizé to Prague 25th Dec., return Prague-Taizé 2nd Jan. Those who come to Taizé before Christmas will help with the welcome in Prague.
— From other countries: write to Taizé for information.

Send in your registration form by 1 December at the latest. Fuller information will be sent in November to those who have already registered.
— Those who live in Britain send their forms to a contact person (see page 7).
— Only the following should register direct to Taizé: families with children; those with special accommodation needs; anyone living outside Britain. Address: European Meeting, Taizé Community, 71250 CLUNY, France. Tel: 85.50.30.02 Fax: 85.50.30.15

European Meeting Registration Form. Send in by December 1st either to a contact person (Britain) or (if you live outside Britain) to Taizé.

FIRST NAME :

FAMILY NAME :

ADDRESS :

(with post code and country)

Tel.: ...../..... Occupation: ..... Age : .....

Circle "Yes" or "No" *or complete where necessary:*

- I am coming with a group from the town of .....
  led by .....
- For adults (over 30 years) and those who cannot sleep on the floor:
  I need a bed: yes / no : *If "yes", say whether you are (please circle):*
  woman man couple family with ... children disabled person with helper
- I will arrive on 28th December: yes / no (arrival between 7am and 12pm)
- I will arrive on 26th December (17-30 year olds only): yes / no
  to help with **(please circle):** animation / work / music team.
- N.B. If, for any reason, you are arranging your own accommodation please send us the address where you will be staying.
- I would like ... more registration forms (photocopy your own if possible)

Entering the mystery of God

One of the groups in Taizé this summer offered a reflection on the mystery of God revealed in the Bible. Andrej Rublev's icon of the Trinity (see page 7) helps us to enter, by means of contemplation, into a greater understanding of God's love.

One of the best-known Russian icons is the one called the Icon of the Trinity, painted in the fifteenth century by the monk Andrej Rublev. It is not, in fact, an image of the Holy Trinity but depicts a Bible story, found in chapter 18 of the Book of Genesis. Three mysterious strangers visit Abraham and Sara under the oak of Mamre. Abraham welcomes these visitors very generously and, in them, he and his wife receive a visit from God, who promises them a son. From this story, the Orthodox tradition created an icon, calling it the "Icon of Hospitality" or "The Hospitality of Abraham".

At the same time, Christians have for centuries understood this story as an announcement or foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Trinity, of a God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In painting this icon, Rublev omitted all the anecdotal elements to concentrate on the essential, to help us enter into the fathomless mystery of God. Everything centers on the three angels sitting around the table, on which a single cup stands.

The table is rectangular, with four sides, and there are only three angels. In the front, an empty place. Who is this place for? Upon reflection, the answer is clear: for you, for me, for whoever prays before the icon! In this way Rublev reveals to us a basic truth of our faith: God invites every human being to enter into a personal relationship with him or, in the language of the icon, to take our place at his table.

Now look at the table. In the middle, a cup with something inside it. It's hard to see but, on other icons of the Hospitality of Abraham, the head of a calf can be recognized (cf. Gen 18,7). This is another gesture of hospitality, of generosity: one offers a guest, even a stranger, the best one has. But it seems that, on Rublev's icon, the calf has been changed into a lamb. Can we discover the significance of a lamb in the Bible?

First of all, calfs or lambs are animals offered in sacrifice to God. In the ancient world, people were very aware that everything was a gift from God. So, before enjoying the fruits of their labour, the farmer or the shepherd wished to thank God for his gifts by returning part of what they had received. That is where the practice of offering sacrifices comes in: it refers to something set apart for God.

In Exodus 12, we find an example of such a sacrifice. When the people are liberated from Egypt, they celebrate Passover. Each family acquires a spotless lamb and offers it to God. This is called a sacrifice of communion, a fellowship-offering, because the sacrificed animal is then eaten. But although everything is a gift from God, one thing belongs to God in a special way — life. And for the Bible, the sign of life is blood.

Here, the blood of the lamb is placed on the doors of the houses as a sign of the liberation from slavery by the act of God (Ex 12,22f). And in Ex 24, to mark the covenant, the relationship between God and the people, Moses sprinkles the blood of sacrificed animals first on the altar, a symbol of God, and then on the people. The meaning is clear: from now on God and his people share a common life.

We find lambs elsewhere in the Old Testament. The prophet Jeremiah, in danger of death, compares himself to "a gentle lamb led to the slaughter" (Jer 11,19). This has nothing to do with a sacrifice; it is an image of his wounded innocence, of the vulnerability that follows from his calling.

And a generation later, another prophet uses the same image to describe the mysterious figure of the Servant of the Lord (Isa 53,7). This Servant goes further than Jeremiah, because his sufferings and death are not simply a tragedy; they lead, in a mysterious way, to the healing of his compatriots (Isa 53,5).

When John the Baptist calls Jesus "the Lamb of God" (John 1,29.36), he sees him as the Servant who gives his life to heal humanity by forgiving their sins. He also sees him as the true Passover lamb who, by giving his life (his "blood"), creates an unbreakable communion between God and human beings. The evangelist John shows this in another way: Jesus is condemned to death at the same time that, in the Temple, the priests are slaughtering the lambs for the Passover meal (John 19,14).

Finally, in the Book of Revelation, Jesus is described as a lamb that had been slain and is now standing in the midst of God's throne (Rev 5,6); he opens the book sealed with seven seals (Rev 5-6). In other words, by his passover from death to life, Jesus reveals fully God's plan, his loving will, and he does it by leading us to "the wellsprings of living water" (Rev 7,17). Thus, by placing the lamb in the centre of the table, Rublev tells us that it is through Jesus, the Christ, and above all by the gift of his life, that we enter into relation with God.

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

November

Meditating on the word

1 Thu **Mt 5.1-12** • *1 Jn 3.1-3*
ALL SAINTS We are already God's children. What we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed, but we know that we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is.

2 Fri **Mk 9.33-37** • *Is 25.6-9*
The Lord has destroyed the veil of mourning that enfolded all peoples. He has swallowed up death forever.

3 Sat **Lk 14.25-27** • *Ph 4.4-7*
Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice!

4 SUN 1 Th 2.7-9,13 • ***Mk 12.28b-34***
Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself. These are the two greatest commandments.

5 Mon **Lk 15.1-7** • *1 Th 1.1-7*
Paul writes: You have imitated the Lord by welcoming the Word with the joy of the Holy Spirit despite severe suffering.

6 Tue **Lk 15.8-10** • *1 Th 2.2-7a*
God has entrusted us with the Gospel, and so we preach, not trying to please people but God who knows our hearts.

7 Wed 1 Th 2.13-14 • ***Lk 15.11-24***
Coming to his senses, the prodigal son said: I will leave this place and go to my Father and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son." But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him.

8 Thu **Lk 15.25-32** • *1 Th 3.6-10*
Paul writes: Your faith has been a great encouragement to us in the middle of our own distress and hardship.

9 Fri Lk 16.13-16 • ***1 Th 3.11-13***
May God make your love increase so that it overflows for each other and for everyone. May he confirm your hearts.

10 Sat 1 Th 4.1-3a • ***Lk 17.3b-6***
Jesus said: If your brother wrongs you seven times in a day and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent", forgive him.

11 SUN 1 Th 4.13-18 • ***Mk 12.41-44***
Jesus saw a poor widow put two small coins into the temple treasury and, calling his disciples, he said, "In truth I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others, for they all gave out of their wealth, but she has put in everything she possessed."

12 Mon 1 Th 4.7-9 • ***Lk 17.11-19***
To the Samaritan who returned to thank Jesus for healing him, Jesus said: Rise and go. Your faith has saved you.

13 Tue Lk 17.20-21 • ***1 Th 5.16-24***
Be always joyful, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances.

14 Wed Lk 17.22-25 • ***2 Th 1.3-5/11-12***
May God fulfill every good purpose of yours by his power and complete all that you have been doing by faith.

15 Thu Lk 18.6-8 • ***2 Th 2.13-14***
God chose you from the beginning to be saved by faith in the truth and by the Spirit.

16 Fri **Lk 18.9-14** • *2 Th 2.15-17*
May our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father who has given us his love and, through his grace, such ceaseless encouragement and sure hope, encourage and strengthen you in every good word and deed.

17 Sat Lk 18.15-17 • ***2 Th 3.3-16***
May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

18 SUN 1 Th 5.1-2,4-6 • ***Mk 13.28-32***
Jesus said: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

19 Mon Lk 18.18-27 • ***Rv 1.4-8***
Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the First-born from among the dead. He loves us and has washed away our sins.

20 Tue Rv 1.17-18 • ***Lk 18.28-30***
Jesus said: There is no one who has left house, wife, brothers, parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive many times as much in this age and, in the world to come, eternal life.

21 Wed Lk 18.31-34 • ***Rv 2.8-10***
The Lord says: I know your trials and your poverty, yet you are rich: do not fear suffering, stay faithful until death, and I shall give you the crown of life.

22 Thu Rv 2.17 • ***Lk 18.35-43***
Jesus said to a blind man: Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you. And instantly his sight returned and he followed Jesus, glorifying God.

23 Fri Rv 3.7-12 • ***Lk 19.1-10***
Jesus said: The Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.

24 Sat Lk 19.28-40 • ***Rv 3.20-22***
I stand at the door, knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

25 SUN Ezk 34.11-12,15-17 • ***Mt 25.34-40***
Jesus said: In truth I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

26 Mon Lk 20.9-19 • ***Rv 21.1-4***
God will make his home among human beings; they will be his people and he will be their God.

27 Tue Lk 20.20-26 • ***Rv 21.5-7***
God says: I am the Beginning and the End. I shall give water from the well of life freely to anyone who is thirsty.

28 Wed **Lk 21.1-4** • *Rv 21.10-11,22-25*
The nations will walk in the light of Christ, and the kings of the earth will bring their treasure to the city of God.

29 Thu Rv 22.1-5 • ***Lk 21.8,12-19***
Jesus said to his disciples: You will be persecuted because of my name. But make up your mind not to worry about how to defend yourselves, for I shall give you words and wisdom.

30 Fri Zc 10.8-9 • ***Mt 4.18-22***
St ANDREW Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Johannine Hours

Deuteronomy 30,11-14

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

Who has not got exhausted by running after shining mirages of ideals that could never become reality? The human imagination constantly produces images of perfect situations where all problems are solved. It says: do you see that perfect prayer, that understanding of the faith, that Christian heroism that you could attain? And then people start demanding this not just from themselves but from others, too: "If they could only understand, if they would just live in this way, we could go so far!"

Compared with all these demands that can never be realized and that lead only to emptiness, the Word of God, expressing the reality of his love (that is what is meant by the "Law"), brings us back to what we are. God does not ask us to go up to heaven to discover its mysteries; he does not require the exploit of crossing the sea, something practically impossible in those days. The demands our imagination makes on us push us and others beyond our resources and our limits, where there is only the void, but God's Word is there where we are. It invites us to return to our hearts just as they are, for it is above all there that we encounter God.

The word is also "in your mouth": that means, at a time when people always read aloud, that the word read again and again (Ps 1) becomes a simple means of communion with God.

- What demands made on me could lead me far away from myself and from God?
  What words of the Gospel speak to my heart?

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

Meditating on the word

December

1 Sat **Lk 22.24-27** • *1 Jn 5.1-4*
Loving God means keeping his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.

2 SUN **Mk 13.33-37** • *Is 63.16-64.7*
ADVENT You come to the help of those who gladly do right, Lord; keeping your ways reminds them of you.

3 Mon Mt 8.5-11 • ***Is 2.1-5***
The peoples of the earth will say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, for him to teach us his ways and for us to walk in his paths.

4 Tue Is 4.2-6 • ***Lk 10.21-24***
Jesus said: I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and clever, and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

5 Wed Is 7.10-14 • ***Mt 15.29-37***
Jesus took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke them and gave them to his disciples, and they gave them to the crowd. They all ate their fill.

6 Thu Is 8.11-18 • ***Mt 7.21-27***
Jesus said: It is not the one who says to me, "Lord, Lord," who will enter the kingdom of heaven but the person who does the will of my Father.

7 Fri Mt 9.27-31 • ***Is 11.1-4***
Isaiah said: God's Spirit will be upon the Messiah. He will not judge by appearances, but he will judge the weak with justice and give fair sentence for the humble in the land.

8 Sat Is 43.1 • ***Lk 1.26-38***
Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.

9 SUN 2 P 3.8-14 • ***Mk 1.1-8***
As it is written in the book of Isaiah, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight", John the Baptist was in the desert announcing a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

10 Mon Lk 5.17-26 • ***Is 11.5-9***
Isaiah said: On that day there shall be no more hurt or violence, for the land will be filled with the knowledge of God as the water covers the bottom of the sea.

11 Tue Is 11.10-16 • ***Mt 18.12-14***
Jesus said: If the shepherd finds his lost sheep, it gives him more joy than the ninety-nine that did not stray at all. In the same way, it is not the will of your Father in heaven for any of these little ones to be lost.

12 Wed **Mt 11.28-30** • *Is 12.2-6*
Joyfully you will draw water from the springs of salvation, and you will say, "Praise the Lord and call on his name. Proclaim his deeds to the nations!"

13 Thu Is 25.1-5 • ***Mt 9.35-38***
At the sight of the crowds Jesus was moved to compassion, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

14 Fri Mt 17.10-13 • ***Is 25.9-10a***
On that day, it will be said: Look, this is our God; we put our hope in him and he saved us. Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.

15 Sat Mt 1.18-24 • ***Is 28.16-17***
The Lord says: See, I am laying a foundation stone for my people. And I will take justice for a measure and righteousness as a level.

16 SUN Is 61.1-11 • ***Jn 1.6-18***
The Word was the true light that gives light to everyone. To all those who accepted him he gave the right to become children of God.

17 Mon Jn 5.33-36 • ***Is 49.13***
Shout for joy, you heavens; earth exult! For the Lord is consoling his people and having compassion on his afflicted ones.

18 Tue Lk 1.5-25 • ***Jr 23.5-6***
"Look, the days are coming, when I shall give a saviour to my people. And my people will live in peace. This is the name he will be called: "The Lord is our Saving Justice."

19 Wed Heb 10.37 • ***Lk 1.39-45***
Elizabeth said to Mary: Blessed is she who believed that the promise the Lord made her would be fulfilled.

20 Thu 2 S 7.1-11 • ***Lk 1.46-56***
Mary said: The Lord has come to the help of his servant, being mindful of his faithful love as he promised to our ancestors.

21 Fri Lk 1.57-66 • ***Zp 3.14-18***
Your God is with you. He will quiet you with his love, he will dance with joy for you.

22 Sat 1 S 1.24-2.2 • ***Lk 1.67-79***
Zechariah prophesied: Blessed be the Lord, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and established for us a power of salvation.

23 SUN Rm 16.25-27 • ***Lk 1.26-38***
The angel said to Mary: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

24 Mon Is 9.1-6 ;Tt 2.11-14 • ***Lk 2.1-14***
The angel of the Lord said to the shepherds: Do not be afraid. I bring you news of a great joy, a joy to be shared by all the people: today a Saviour has been born to you, he is Christ the Lord.

25 Tue Heb 1.1-6 ;**Lk 2.15-20** • *Is 52.7-10*
CHRISTMAS All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

26 Wed Mt 10.17-22 • ***Ac 7.55-60***
St STEPHEN As they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And with these words he fell asleep.

27 Thu 1 Jn 1.1-4 • ***Mk 1.16-20***
St JOHN Jesus said to his first disciples, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people." And at once they left their nets and followed him.

28 Fri Jr 20.8-9 • ***Lk 17.20-21***
Jesus said: The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, for the kingdom of God is among you.

29 Sat Mt 11.25-26 • ***2 Co 4.7-10***
We carry the treasure of God's glory in earthen vessels so that it may be quite clear that the radiance comes from God, not from us.

30 SUN Heb 11.1-2,8-10 • ***Jn 12.23-26***
Jesus said: Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be.

31 Mon Mt 22.34-40 • ***Heb 12.1-2a***
Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entagles, to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.

Johannine Hours

Luke 7,36-50

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

In this Gospel passage, the contrast is not between friends and enemies of Christ. Both persons — Simon, the prominent man, and the woman with a bad reputation — want to be friends with Jesus. Simon invites him for a meal; the woman, unable to do this, comes spontaneously, without being invited, bringing a precious gift.

The conclusion of the story, "Your faith has saved you," clearly indicates that it deals above all with the road to faith. Why is it that the woman finds the road whereas Simon stops halfway? Simon had certainly invited Jesus with the good intention of knowing him better, of discovering whether he was perhaps the Messiah. If so, he would probably go on to place his trust in him, to believe in him. But he first observes Jesus, without getting involved. He keeps a certain distance ("You did not give me any water for my feet...," Jesus says to him) to enable him to step back as soon as he judges that Jesus is not the one he is waiting for.

The weeping woman, on the other hand, does not observe Christ nor attempt to form an opinion concerning him. She simply intuits his forgiveness and loves him. And her love for him leads her to faith. It is impossible to grasp the mystery of Christ without loving him with a heart made transparent by his forgiveness. Loving Christ, even without understanding much about him, opens with certainty the road of faith.

- What characterizes the attitudes of Simon and the woman towards Jesus?
How can our love lead us to trust and believe?

Jesus, Risen Lord, you always remain within us. And you accomplish this miracle: by your Holy Spirit, you penetrate to the depths of our soul, so that "it is no longer I who live; Christ lives in me." And so each of us can tell you: I belong to Christ, I am Christ's.

Prayer by Brother Roger

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Preparation meeting for Prague: Saturday 8th December, at Westminster Cathedral Hall, Ambrosden Avenue, London SW1 (next to Westminster Cathedral): 1.30pm: shared lunch; 2.30pm: meeting with Father Vladimir Felzmann about Czechoslovakia; followed by small groups and other activities; 5.00pm: common prayer (continued by a vigil for those who wish to stay longer). Any queries to Claire Debenham, (071) 720 4677.

Listening to the CONTINENTS

USA

Different, but together

A young man from St. Gall, an African-American inner-city parish, spent some time in Taizé. When he returned home, he wrote: "Before I went to Taizé I was getting discouraged by racism. I thought that there wasn't any hope that people in our country would live in harmony or peace together.

"I didn't become discouraged just overnight, because I had been trying to deal with the issue. It seems like every time a black person or a minority does something wrong it shows up in the newspapers or on television. It was as though the problems that we have with racism wouldn't end.

"Always having to listen to the racism issues and try to sort them out makes you wonder where you are. Am I racist? You hear about all the things that happened in the past as far as slavery and all that. My mother tells me about how my uncle and my grandfather were killed by white people. I also get frustrated with blacks and other minorities — native Americans, Hispanics, Asians — when I hear about them killing and hurting each other.

"When I went to Taizé and saw so many different people and nationalities living together, it did my heart good. People were not only living together but communicating and working together as well, even when there are so many languages and not always someone to translate what's been said. There it seems like everyone has one thing on their mind: and that's trying to get an experience of God from someone else.

"I still hold on to the things that I learned in Taizé, but it's hard to work at bringing people together when you're doing it by yourself. It's really something I want to do, and I don't think I'll ever stop trying. If each person begins with themselves at least that's a start."

India

Neither great, nor rich, nor important, nor powerful

An Indian bishop who has come several times to Taizé wrote us to share his experience in the North-East, near the border with China and Burma.

"For such a long time, I have wanted to write you during my pastoral visits. Every evening I have been writing down my thoughts during days spent visiting Christians, often very isolated, in the Himalayas.

These visits took place at Sadiya, where there once was a very famous kingdom, where five large rivers flow into the Bramapoutra. I have been here several times these past few years: little by little, the Church is putting down roots...

"I'm thinking about the meaning of Christian witness. Our task on earth is not to become great, or rich, or important, or powerful. Our task is to witness to our deepest convictions. If we believe in Christ, we have to witness to him, in other words root our lives in him and say this to others. Our smallness is not a hindrance, our incapacity is not an excuse, and our incompetence is not a reason to be afraid. In some villages, I saw children communicating the faith to their parents. If we wanted to wait until we acquired perfect knowledge before witnessing to such a great mystery, we would have to wait for all eternity!

But each person has been called to give according to what he has received. Have we received a lot? Then we must give a lot. Have we received a little? Then let us share the little we have received.

"In fact, concerning the sharing of the faith, our weakness is our strength, for it is in this way that the power of truth wins out. In the work of evangelization, a position of weakness is an advantage rather than a disadvantage, because it becomes clear that Our Lord himself is at work. The awareness of our limits enables us to leave room for the One who is infinite."

continued from page 1

Fifty years ago...

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie: "You were founded during the darkest days of the Second World War when Europe was divided by hatred and fear. Since then Taizé has become a beacon of light and hope... I recall my own visit to Taizé and the many encounters with the community and its supporters all over the world. It is not too much to say that whenever I have been rejoicing at some ecumenical event, or visiting the desperate in their time of need, Taizé has been there." Other messages also arrived, notably from the President of the German Evangelical Churches, from leaders of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, from the United Church of South India, from Methodists of Scotland, etc... A short while ago, the president of the Evangelical Churches of East Germany wrote to Brother Roger: "The impulses that have come to us from your community for decades now are characterized not only by their ecumenical openness, but above all by the unbreakable bond between the depth of prayer and a commitment on behalf of suffering humanity. During the time when we were deprived of political freedom, several of your brothers dared to come to see us again and again."

Letter from Taizé

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